

Knowing Your Limits

After a storm of feelings in the arms of a trusted adult, children once again manage their own behavior. They can solve problems, play well with friends, satisfy their curiosity about bugs and worms, and contribute ideas at circle time.

However, listening can be difficult for us as adults. After all, most adults were not listened to with this kind of caring attention when we were upset.

Getting Help

1. **Sometimes** a child will keep crying or tantruming longer than you have the resource or time for.
 - a. At these times, helping them to get their attention out onto the interesting environment and activities will be necessary.
 - b. Give them information about what is next. Through loud crying, children can hear when you say, “We need to get ready to wash hands for lunch in 5 minutes,” or “I need to go on my break in 3 minutes.”
2. **What happens if you start to “lose it?”**
 - a. Anytime you find you are impatient, getting upset, or angry, it is time to stop.
 - b. You can say something like, “I care about you and am not sure what to do right now, so we are going to find something else to do,” and then do so.
3. **If you don’t have the time and resource** to listen to emotional release on any given day, don’t worry. The child will try again. S/he doesn’t want to carry around the hurts any longer than necessary.
 - a. Rigid patterns of behavior can help you know when it is going to happen again. It helps to *plan ahead*
 - i. Ask the parent to come a bit early for an extended goodbye so the child can offload feelings of separation with the parent and you there.
 - ii. Plan with another member of your teaching team for the time of day or circumstance when the pattern of behavior occurs. Be ready to set the limit as soon as it happens.
 - b. Rebuilding connection through emotional release will begin to replace the pattern with rational, flexible behavior.
4. **Seek outside help**, making sure the family is central to the process. Use community resources—“It takes a village to raise a child.”
 - a. Social service agencies
 - b. Physician

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- c. Public health nurse
- d. School district special services
- e. Child protective services
- f. Special needs
- g. Others

5. Find your own emotional release: “When YOU become overwhelmed and drained, seek the counsel of a supportive friend or co-worker. Find someone you trust who will just listen and can give you the release you need to face the next day with an optimistic attitude.”*

*“From Exchange Everyday’ daily online article for September 5, 2012:

"Responding Professionally and Compassionately to Challenging Behavior" by Karen Stephens is the lead article in the **Beginnings Workshop** unit, "When Children are Difficult"